an actuator assembly responsive to the first actuating member for driving the mechanism, the actuator assembly mechanically coupling the first actuating member with the mechanism such that the mechanism can be rotated about the longitudinal axis of the medical instrument without rotating the proximal portion.

24. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 23, wherein the mechanism is a suturing mechanism.

25. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 23, wherein the mechanism manipulates a position of a needle.

26. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 23, wherein the first actuating member comprises a thumbwheel.

27. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 23, wherein the proximal portion comprises a handle assembly having a housing, and the actuator assembly comprises a rotator, wherein rotation of the rotator rotates the mechanism relative to the proximal portion.

28. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 27, wherein the actuator assembly further comprises:

a first cylinder;

an actuator coupled to drive the first cylinder linearly in response to movement of the first actuating member;

a second cylinder rotatably coupled to the first cylinder; and

a connecting member which couples the second cylinder to the mechanism, whereby actuation of the actuator provides linear actuation to the mechanism.

29. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 28, wherein the first cylinder is slidably mounted on the housing, and wherein the second cylinder is slidably mounted on the rotator.

30. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 28, wherein the connecting member comprises an arm actuator rod.

31. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 27, wherein the actuator assembly further comprises:

a first outer cylinder;

a first inner cylinder positioned within, and coaxially to, the first outer cylinder;

a first actuator coupled to drive the first inner cylinder linearly in response to movement of the first actuating member;

a second actuator coupled to drive the first outer cylinder linearly in response to movement of the first actuating member;

a second outer cylinder rotatably coupled to the first outer cylinder;

a second inner cylinder positioned within, and coaxially to, the second outer cylinder, and rotatably coupled to the first inner cylinder;

a first connecting member which couples the second outer cylinder to the mechanism; and

a second connecting member which couples the second inner cylinder to the mechanism,

whereby actuation of the first actuator provides linear actuation to the mechanism, and actuation of the second actuator provides linear actuation to the mechanism.

32. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the first connecting member comprises an arm actuator rod.

33. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the second connecting member comprises an arm actuator rod.

34. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the first outer cylinder is slidably mounted on the housing, the first inner cylinder is slidably mounted in the first outer cylinder, the second outer cylinder is slidably mounted on the rotator, and the second inner cylinder is slidably mounted in the second outer cylinder.

35. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein:

the first actuating member comprises a thumbwheel rotatably coupled to the housing about an axis;

the first actuator comprises a first linear actuator rod coupled to a first off-axis position of the thumbwheel;

the second actuator comprises a second linear actuator rod coupled to a second off-axis position of the thumbwheel, the second off-axis position being on the opposite

side of the axis from the first off-axis position, whereby rotation of the thumbwheel about the axis actuates the first and second actuators in substantially opposite directions.

36. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the first outer cylinder comprises a first outer slot, and the first inner cylinder comprises a first inner tab slidably engaged with the first outer slot.

37. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the housing comprises a housing slot, and the first outer cylinder comprises a first outer tab slidably engaged with the housing slot.

38. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the second outer cylinder comprises a second outer slot, and the second inner cylinder comprises a second inner tab slidably engaged with the second outer slot.

39. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the rotator comprises a rotator slot, and the second outer cylinder comprises a second outer tab slidably engaged with the rotator slot.

40. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 31, wherein the first inner cylinder comprises a first coaxial hole and the second inner cylinder comprises a second coaxial hole, the second coaxial hole being substantially colinear with the first coaxial hole.

41. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 40, wherein the actuator assembly further comprises a third linear actuator rod which couples a second actuating member to the mechanism, the third linear actuator rod extending through the first coaxial hole and the second coaxial hole.

42. (New) The medical instrument of Claim 41, wherein the second actuating member comprises:

a trigger pivot pin fixedly coupled to the housing;

a trigger rotatably coupled to the trigger pivot pin and coupled to the third linear actuator rod; and

a trigger spring with a first end coupled to the trigger and a second end coupled to the housing, whereby rotation of the trigger about the trigger pivot pin provides linear actuation to the mechanism.